AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please amend claims 2, 4-6, 8-11, 13, 16-20, 22, 26-27, 29 and 31-32 as indicated below. Please cancel claims 28 and 30.

1. (Original) A process for preparing a concentrated milk protein ingredient which comprises the steps of:

providing a solution having a kappa-casein containing milk protein which is a membrane filtration retentate;

adjusting the divalent ion content of a said protein solution to a predetermined level at which no substantial gel is formed after treatment with a milk clotting enzyme;

adding a food grade milk clotting enzyme under reaction conditions appropriate to convert said kappa-casein to para kappa-casein while maintaining a solution;

deactivating or removing said enzyme to terminate said conversion; and

concentrating said solution.

2. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 1 ~~any one of the preceding claims~~, wherein other proteins are added to or are present in said milk protein solution.

3. (Original) The process of claim 2, wherein said other proteins are added to said milk protein solution prior to adjusting said divalent ion content.

4. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 1 ~~any one of the preceding claims~~, wherein said divalent ion is the calcium ion.

5. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 1 ~~any one of the preceding claims~~, wherein said divalent ion content is adjusted by cation exchange using a food grade cation exchanger.

6. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 1 ~~any one of claims 1 to 4~~, wherein said divalent ion content is adjusted by the addition of a food grade source of a monovalent cation.

7. (Original) The process of claim 6, wherein said monovalent cation is potassium, sodium or hydrogen.

8. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 1 ~~any one of the preceding claims~~, wherein said food grade enzyme is rennet.

9. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 1 ~~any one of the preceding claims~~, wherein said divalent ion content is reduced by at least 25% from that in skim milk.

10. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 1 ~~any one of the preceding claims~~, wherein said ion content is reduced by at least 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90 or 100% from that in skim milk.

11. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 1 ~~any one of the preceding claims~~, wherein said kappa-casein is converted to para kappa-casein at a pH in the range of 4.5 to 7.5 at a temperature in the range of 0 to 70°C.

12. (Original) The process of claim 11, wherein said conversion is at a temperature of 10, 20, 30, 40, 50 or 60°C.

13. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 1 ~~any one of the preceding claims~~, wherein fat or edible oil is added to said milk protein solution.

14. (Original) The process of claim 13, wherein said fat is cream.

15. (Original) The process of claim 13, wherein said fat is milk fat.

16. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 1 ~~any one of the preceding claims~~, wherein said milk protein is made from whole milk.

17. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 1 ~~any one of the preceding claims~~, carried out as a batch process.

18. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 1 ~~any one of claims 1 to 16~~, carried out as a continuous process.

19. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 1 ~~any one of claims 1 to 16~~, carried out as a combination of a batch and a continuous process.

20. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 1 ~~any one of the preceding claims~~, which includes the additional step of heating said concentrated solution to form a process cheese.

21. (Original) The process of claim 20, which includes the step of combining said concentrated solution with cheese making ingredients prior to or during said heating step.

22. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 1 ~~any one of claims 1 to 19~~, which includes the additional step of drying said concentrated milk protein solution.

23. (Original) The process of claim 22 which includes the additional step of rehydrating said dried solution with hot water and blending to form a cheese.

24. (Original) The process of claim 23, wherein said water is heated before blending.

25. (Original) The process of claim 23, wherein said water is heated during or after blending.

26. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 23 ~~any one of claims 23 to 25~~ wherein said water is heated to between 30°C and 100°C.

27. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 23 ~~any one of claims 23 to 26~~ wherein said rehydrating water contains calcium.

28. (Cancelled).

29. (Currently Amended) The use of ~~A cheese prepared from~~ an ingredient ~~as defined in~~ prepared by the method of claim [[28]] 1 in the manufacture of a cheese.

30. (Cancelled).

31. (Currently Amended) The ~~processed cheese~~ use of claim 29 ~~which~~ wherein the cheese is a cheese spread.

32. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 1 ~~any one of the preceding claims~~ which includes the preliminary step of subjecting a milk to membrane filtration and recovering the milk protein retentate thereby formed.

33. (Original) The process of claim 32 wherein said membrane filtration is ultrafiltration.

34. (Original) The process of claim 33 wherein said ultrafiltration includes diafiltration.